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United Nations Forum on Forests

Programme budget implications of the recommendations contained in the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its sixth session

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 31 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council

I. Introduction

1. In its report on its sixth session,[1] the United Nations Forum on Forests, in describing the action taken by the Forum on the implementation of its decision 5/2, noted that the Secretary had read out a statement on the draft resolution entitled "Outcome of the sixth session of the United Nations Forum on Forests" (see E/2006/42, chap. I, sect. A), prepared by the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts of the United Nations Secretariat. In that statement (see annex), it was noted that delays in finalizing consultations on the draft resolution had not provided the Secretariat with the requisite 48-hour minimum period required to prepare and present the statement of financial implications of the draft resolution. The statement concluded with a commitment to carry out a thorough review of the implications of the draft resolution and to submit a written statement containing a detailed analysis of its programme budget implications to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session. The results of the review are set out below.

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council 2006, Supplement No. 22* (E/2006/42 and Corr.1 and 2).

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II. Relevant requests contained in the draft resolution

2. Under the terms of operative paragraphs 10, 26, 27 and 29 of the draft resolution recommended by the United Nations Forum on Forests for adoption by the Economic and Social Council, the Council would, inter alia:

(a) Decide that, following its seventh session in 2007, the Forum should meet biennially for a period of up to two weeks on the basis of a focused multi-year programme of work to be adopted by the Forum at its seventh session;

(b) Request the Forum to conclude and adopt at its seventh session a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and request the secretariat of the Forum to circulate to the member States, by 31 July 2006, a compilation of the draft indicative elements and other proposals submitted by members during the sixth session;

(c) Decide that the Forum should, within its existing resources, convene an open-ended ad hoc working group for up to five days to consider the content of the non-legally binding instrument to assist the Forum in its deliberations.

III. Relationship of the requests to the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2006-2007

3. The activities referred to above would fall under subprogramme 9, Sustainable forest management, of programme 7, Economic and social affairs, of the biennial programme plan and priorities for the period 2006-2007, as revised by the General Assembly (A/59/6/Rev.1 and Corr.1). Modifications to the programme narrative, resulting from the requests contained in the draft resolution, will be considered by the Committee on Programme and Coordination at its forty-sixth session in August-September 2006 (see A/61/125).

IV. Activities by which the proposed requests would be carried out

4. Should the Economic and Social Council adopt the draft resolution, the programme and financial impact of the Forum's meeting biennially, after its seventh session in 2007, as referred to in paragraph 2 (a) above, would be addressed in the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009.

5. Pursuant to operative paragraphs 27 and 29 of the draft resolution, the secretariat of the Forum would circulate to the member States, by 31 July 2006, a compilation of the draft indicative elements and other proposals submitted by members during the sixth session; and an open-ended ad hoc working group would be convened to consider the content of the non-legally binding instrument in order to assist the Forum in its deliberations, as referred to in paragraphs 2 (b) and (c) above.

V. Modifications required in the programme of work and the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007

6. In order to take into account the provisions of the draft resolution, the programmed outputs of section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 (A/60/6 (Sect. 9)) would be modified and would be incorporated into the programme of work of section 9, subject to the related approval by the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. The required modifications to the outputs would be as follows:

Paragraph 9.91

(a) (i) a.: After the words "sixth and seventh sessions of the Forum (80)", the words "substantive servicing of the ad hoc working group on the non-legally binding instrument (10)" would be added; and the words "meetings of the Bureau of the Forum (8)" would be replaced with the words "meetings of the Bureau of the Forum (10)";

(a) (i) b.: At the end of the subparagraph, the words "report on items of the agenda for the ad hoc working group on the non-legally binding instruments (1)" would be added;

(a) (ii): At the end of the subparagraph, the words "report of the United Nations Forum on Forests ad hoc working group on the non-legally binding instrument (1)" would be added;

(a) (iii): The words "interlinkages between forests and other sectors (1)" and the words "furthering the common understanding of sustainable forest management at the international level (1)" would be deleted and the words "open-ended ad hoc working group on the non-legally binding instrument (1)" would be inserted at the end of the subparagraph;

(b) (vi): At the end of the subparagraph, the words "elements of a non-legally binding instrument (1), and guidelines for voluntary reporting on the non-legally binding instrument (1)" would be added.

VI. Estimated resource requirements

A. Conference-servicing requirements

7. The conference-servicing requirements, at full cost, for the open-ended ad hoc working group on the non-legally binding instrument are estimated at $348,900, if the working group is convened in New York, and at $272,900, if the working group is convened in Geneva. It is estimated that there would be one week of meetings in December 2006, with 2 meetings per day, for a total of 10 meetings. Interpretation would be provided in all six official languages and documentation to be processed in the six official languages is estimated at 68 pages (pre-session) and 40 pages (post-session). In accordance with the Headquarters principle embodied in General Assembly resolution 40/243, the meetings of the United Nations Forum on Forests should be held in New York. Therefore, any decision to convene the meetings in another venue would represent an exception to the provisions of the aforementioned resolution. Furthermore, the dates of these meetings are subject to the availability of

conference-servicing facilities and resources and would be determined in consultation with the Secretariat.

B. Non-conference-servicing requirements

8. As requested in the draft resolution, an open-ended ad hoc working group to consider the content of a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests would be convened for one week in December 2006, either in New York or in Geneva, the venue to be decided by the Economic and Social Council. It is expected that participation in the working group would be open to all member States. To support the participation of developing countries in the working group, travel expenses for some 100 participants would be provided, including 35 Forum members (who were members of the Commission on Sustainable Development) and 65 other participants from developing countries, with priority given to least developed countries and economies in transition. Should the meeting be held in New York, it is estimated that a total of $535,000 would be required to finance participants' travel. If the meeting is held in Geneva, it is estimated that a total of $485,000 would be required for this purpose. Should the Council decide that the ad hoc working group would be held in Geneva, an additional amount of $45,000 would be required for travel of 10 Secretariat staff members to Geneva to provide substantive servicing.

9. In order to prepare documents for consideration by the ad hoc working group, and to properly reflect the collaboration of forest-related regional and subregional bodies, mechanisms and processes in the work of the Forum, specialized expertise not available in the Secretariat would be required for preparation of: (a) a background study on the elements of a non-legally binding instrument and their implementation and monitoring; and (b) a paper on the best way to incorporate the regional dimension in the work of the Forum. It is estimated that consultancy provision of $70,000 would be required in this regard.

10. The total additional requirements (in dollars) for the implementation of the activities requested in paragraph 29 of the draft resolution with regard to the meetings of the ad hoc working group held either in New York or in Geneva are as follows:

	New York	*Geneva*
Section 2		
Conference-servicing requirements	348 900	272 900
Section 9		
Travel of participants	535 000	485 000
Travel of staff	—	45 000
Consultants	70 000	70 000
Subtotal, section 9	**605 000**	**600 000**
Grand total	**953 900**	**872 900**

VII. Potential for absorption during the biennium 2006-2007

11. No provision has been made under the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 for the conference-servicing costs required for servicing the open-ended ad hoc working group on the non-legally binding instrument; and the additional requirement in this regard could not therefore be met within resources available under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007.

12. As indicated in paragraph 6 above, because of the requirements with respect to preparing and servicing the open-ended ad hoc working group on the non-legally binding instrument, it would be necessary to cancel the holding of two expert group meetings, on interlinkages between forests and other sectors, and on furthering the common understanding of sustainable forest management at the international level. As a result, related resources of $132,000 could be reprogrammed to partially cover the requirements of participants in respect of travelling to the ad hoc working group meeting in December 2006 in either New York or in Geneva. Consultancy requirements of $70,000 could be also financed from the existing consultancy provision related to these two cancelled working groups. The balance of travel requirements for participants in either New York ($403,000) or Geneva ($353,000) is expected to be financed from the resources of the Trust Fund in Support of the United Nations Forum on Forests, in accordance with General Assembly decision 58/554 of 23 December 2003, provided that sufficient additional contributions are received to support these activities. If the meetings of the open-ended ad hoc working group on the non-legally binding instrument are held in Geneva, related travel requirements of 10 Secretariat staff in the amount of $45,000 would be financed from extrabudgetary resources.

13. Consequently, should the Economic and Social Council adopt the draft resolution, an additional appropriation of either $348,900, if the meetings of the ad hoc working group are held in New York, or $272,900, if the meetings are held in Geneva, would be required over and above the resources of section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007.

VIII. Contingency fund

14. It will be recalled that, under the procedures adopted by the General Assembly in its resolutions 41/213 of 19 December 1986 and 42/211 of 21 December 1987, a contingency fund is established for each biennium to accommodate additional expenditures derived from legislative mandates not provided for in the programme budget. Under this procedure, if additional expenditures were proposed that exceed the resources available from the contingency fund, the activities concerned would be implemented only through the redeployment of resources from low-priority areas or modification of existing activities. Otherwise, such additional activities would have to be deferred to a later biennium.

IX. Conclusion

15. **The adoption of the draft resolution by the Economic and Social Council would give rise to additional requirements of either $348,900, if the aforementioned meetings were held in New York, or $272,900, if the meetings were held in Geneva under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, of the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007.**

16. **The additional provisions cannot be met from the contingency fund, as other activities undertaken in the biennium 2006-2007 charged against it are expected to exhaust the fund. The Secretariat will seek to absorb the requirements under the provisions of section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management. In the event that full absorption is not possible, the Secretariat will report the additional requirements arising therefrom in the context of the second performance report for the biennium 2006-2007. The proposal for reporting additional requirements that would not be absorbed within the approved appropriation for 2006-2007 is subject to the approval of the Assembly at its sixty-first session in the context of the consolidated statement of programme budget implications and revised estimates of decisions taken by the Council.**

Annex

Text of the oral statement read out by the Secretary to the United Nations Forum on Forests at its sixth session in connection with the draft resolution contained in the report of the Forum on its sixth session

1. The most recent text of the draft resolution contained in the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its sixth session and recommended to the Economic and Social Council for adoption was made available to the Programme Planning and Budget Division at 2.12 p.m., Friday, 24 February 2006. I wish to put on record the following statement of its financial implications on behalf of the Secretary-General.

2. Under the terms of the currently numbered operative paragraphs 1, 9 and 15 of the draft resolution, the Economic and Social Council would:

> "(a) Decide to strengthen the international arrangement on forests, [including] [through increased, new and additional resources and voluntary contributions [from all sources] by the following;
>
> "(b) Decide that, following its seventh session in 2007, the Forum should meet biennially for a period of up to two weeks on the basis of a focused multi-year programme of work to be adopted by the Forum at its seventh session;
>
> "(c) [Decide to strengthen the secretariat of the Forum [within [its] existing resources, as well] through any increased voluntary extrabudgetary resources to enable it to fulfil its function more effectively;]"

3. The draft resolution before the Forum contains proposals for activities that necessitate analysis and review of the level of resources required to implement them. Owing to the delay in finalizing consultations on the draft resolution and the closing of the sixth session, the Secretariat has not been provided with the requisite 48-hour minimum period to prepare and present the related statement of administrative and financial implications of the draft resolution. This oral statement is presented to inform the Forum that the requirements resulting from adoption of the draft resolution would, to the extent possible, be met from resources approved by the General Assembly for the programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007.

4. Regarding operative paragraphs 1 and 15, the attention of the Forum is drawn to the provisions of section VI of General Assembly resolution 45/248 B of 21 December 1990, in which the Assembly reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee was the appropriate Main Committee of the Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters and also reaffirmed the role of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.

5. In the course of the coming months, the Secretariat expects to carry out a thorough review of the implications of the draft resolution and a written statement containing a detailed analysis of the programme budget implications of the draft resolution would be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 2006, if necessary. With respect to operative paragraph 9, the Secretariat wishes to inform the United Nations Forum on Forests that the financial

implications of the decision would be reported to the seventh session of the Forum when the modalities of the new meeting structure of the Forum were decided.